



NEWS RELEASE

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FORUM FOCUSED ON ECONOMIC GROWTH IN A LOW-CARBON FUTURE

The health of our planet is an issue that affects everyone, and many business owners are looking at how they can grow and thrive while being good to the environment.

On Thursday, November 17, the Township of Langley hosted its 6th Annual Economic Forum to address that concern and provide insight into achieving Economic Growth in a Low-Carbon Future.

“This is a topic that will have a great impact on our community and the world around us, not just in the immediate future, but for generations to come,” said Township Mayor Jack Froese, who welcomed more than 175 people to the event. “These forums are a great opportunity for business leaders in our community to share ideas, listen, learn, and make a difference.”

Moderating the event was strategist, author and sustainability expert Chris Turner, who told that audience that, while many people use the word “sustainability,” there is much debate about what it means. At its core, he said, sustainability is about environmental stewardship and the need to address climate change.

“It’s striking the right balance in our way of building the world and creating a lasting regime of environment stewardship,” he said. “We desperately need to build sustainability into everything we do.”

Langley MLA and Environment Minister Mary Polak was the Forum’s keynote speaker, and said it was a “rare privilege” to be able to combine both her roles.

“The threat of climate change is extremely serious,” said Polak, who noted that the provincial government’s commitment to sustainability means reducing or eliminating greenhouse gas emissions, while still growing the economy. British Columbia’s strategies, which include a revenue-neutral carbon tax, are enforced through the 2008 Climate Action Plan and in 21 actions outlined in the new Climate Leadership Plan, which was launched in August of this year.

Polak noted that British Columbia is one of the few places that managed to grow its economy after the financial downturn of 2008, while meeting its emission reduction targets.

“The challenge,” she said, “is to continue to strike that balance. We all need to encourage and support each other. Everyone has to play a part, big or small. There is no Plan B because there is no Planet B. The task today is to not just think about your business, your community, your growth decisions, but personally – what can I do?”

Economically, BC - with its strong job market and growing economy - is “doing remarkably well” in comparison to other Canadian provinces, reported Ken Peacock, Chief Economist and Vice-President of the Business Council. Langley, he added, is experiencing strong population growth and he gave the community kudos for its efforts to concentrate on densified housing. Densification, he said, contributes to sustainable, liveable, and walkable communities and creates a quality of life that people are attracted to.

“Densification is one of the most valuable, versatile tools in the sustainability tool kit,” agreed Turner. “It’s great to see more of it here in this community.”

The forum then turned to a panel of experts who discussed green sustainable business. Britco’s Director of Sales Craig Mitchell talked about the move towards passive housing and other green building options, while Concert Properties Sustainability Manager Jonathan Meads spoke about “the human element” and the need to engage and educate people when promoting environmental stewardship.

VanCity Green Business Manager Maureen Cureton discussed how environmental leadership leads to good business, and how companies can make or save money by doing what is right for the planet. The key, she said, is to integrate it into the business, not just do it off the side of a desk or through a designated green team.

A second panel made up of Infinity Homes President Tim Bontkes, Clay Construction President Larry Clay, and Vesta Properties President Kent Sillars focused on green sustainable growth. The speakers outlined changes being made in the construction industry to protect the environment, and the public’s reaction to them. Consumers are interested in having energy-efficient homes, they said, and steps are being taken within the construction industry, by suppliers, and at the local government level to make them more affordable.

The forum concluded with a Gold Sponsor Presentation from Fortis BC’s Siraz Dalmir, and a closing keynote address from Cara Pike of Social Capital Strategies. Pike reminded local governments and businesses that “reduced emissions equal money in the bank that can be used for other things,” and that efforts to promote energy efficiency can lead to job growth.

“We don’t just have this responsibility; we have the opportunity,” Pike said.

The Forum was hosted by the Township of Langley’s Economic Development and Investment Department, which appreciates the guest speakers and sponsors who helped present the free educational event.

“These forums offer a value-add proposition to the Township’s businesses as well as to our community, and we are grateful to everyone who supports these events to make them possible,” said Val Gafka, the Township’s Senior Manager of Corporate Administration. “We would like to thank Fortis BC, Business in Vancouver, the Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce, Fraser Valley Real Estate Board, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Vesta, and Wesgroup Properties for sponsoring the 6th Annual Economic Forum.”

For more information, contact the Township of Langley’s Economic Development and Investment Department via email at invest@tol.ca or by phone to 604.533.6084.

